DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 384 CG 025 770

AUTHOR Dykeman, Cass
TITLE Student Assistance Program Implementation and Evaluation.
PUB DATE 23 Jul 94
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the International Conference on Counseling in the 21st Century (4th, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, July 1994).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; At Risk Persons; Children; Counseling; Early Intervention; Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; Helping Relationship; *High Risk Students; *School Counseling; *School Counselors; Student Needs; Students
IDENTIFIERS *Student Assistance Programs

ABSTRACT

Recently, educators have initiated programs to help students address the social and emotional problems which can impair academic performance. This paper reviews current knowledge on one such program called a Student Assistance Program (SAP). SAPs were initially designed to intervene with chemically-dependent high school students, but more recently, SAPs have begun assisting students who are at-risk for academic failure. Two broad organizational models of SAP services exist: the Core Team (CT) model and the Counselor (CN) model. In the CT model, the SAP staff members are organic to the school, whereas with the CN model, key SAP staff members come from outside agencies. Research on SAPs remains sparse and the dearth of quality process evaluations is a pressing concern. Implementation of SAPs should progress logically and include needs assessment, community advisory groups, and comprehensive inservices for school personnel. Schools have reported varying degrees of success for their SAPs; some general improvements for SAPs include awareness programs for parents and students, after-school programs, and referral monitoring. The paper closes with seven suggestions for counselors who are planning or are engaged in SAP work. Contains 22 references. (RJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 374 384

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Cass Dykeman, Ph.D., NCC, NCSC

A Paper Presented to the
4th International Conference on
Counseling in the 21st Century

Vancouver, BC
July 23, 1994

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. DYKEMAN

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Dr. Dykeman is chair of the School Counseling Track at Eastern Washington University in Spokane, WA. Prior to doctoral studies at the University of Virginia, he served as both an elementary and high school counselor in Seattle, WA. As an elementary school counselor, Dr. Dykeman started one of the first elementary SAPs in Washington State. In 1993, he won the William Van Hoose Memorial award.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG025770

Introduction

Within the past few years, educators have sought to establish programs that will help students to better cope with social and emotional problems that can impair academic performance. To that end, many school districts have adapted a proven program from the business world for use with students. In industry, this approach is known as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This approach, in an educational context, is called a Student Assistance Program (SAP). This paper will review what is currently known about SAP implementation and evaluation. Suggestions for counseling professionals planning or participating in SAP interventions will be presented.

SAP Services

SAPs originally were designed to intervene with chemically dependent high school students (Dean, 1989; McGovern & DuPont, 1991; Moore & Forster, 1993). More recently, SAPs have begun providing services to students who are at-risk for academic failure due to social and psychological difficulties (Cooley, 1993; Moore & Forster, 1993; OSAP, 1988; Taylor-Mearhoff, 1990). Also, school districts have been recently expanding SAPs services to the middle school and elementary school levels (Dykeman, 1990).

There exists two broad organizational models of SAP services (McGovern & DuPont, 1991). These models are the Core Team (CT) model and Counselor (CN) model. In the CT model, the SAP staff members are organic to the school. In the CN model, key SAP staff members are from outside agencies contracted with the school. Structurally, SAPs are similar to the Multi-Disciplinary Teams found in Special Education (Moore & Forster, 1993). Services traditionally offered by SAPs include: 1. Identification of at-risk students to the SAP, 2.

professional chemical dependency assessments, 3. referral to SAP, school and/or community resources, 4. support groups for at-risk students, 5. parent, teacher, and student psycho-educational activities, 6. school policy development, and 7. peer facilitators training and supervision (Cooley, 1993; Emert, 1988).

SAP Research

Moore and Forster (1993) commented that the SAP research and evaluation literature is sparse. Klitzner (1987) outlined six common problems with the evaluations conducted thus far on school-based intervention/prevention programs such as SAPs. These problems were: 1. Weak experimental designs for the measurement of outcomes, 2. premature program evaluation, 3. lack of attention to process evaluation, 3. inattention to risk factors and intervening variables, 4. weak outcome measures, and 5. emphasis on statistical rather than clinical significance. All of the studies discussed below suffered from one or more of these problems. In particular, the dearth of quality process evaluation is a pressing concern given the crucial nature of implementation in this type of programming (Klitzner, Blasinsky, Marshall, & Paquet, 1985).

SAP Implementation

Cooley (1993) outlined nine critical steps in successful SAP implementation. These steps were: 1. Needs assessment, 2. formation of community advisory group, 3. comprehensive inservice for teacher and administrators, 4. SAP policies and procedures handbook development for faculty and parents, 5. inservice on SAP policies and use of materials for faculty, 6. build program slowly with emphasis on quality, 7. public recognition of faculty who participate in SAP, 8. consensus building approach by SAP coordinator, and 9. quality program evaluation.

Anecdotal reports insist that both parent (Moore & Forster, 1993) and teacher (Cooley,

1993; Dean, 1989; Emert, 1988; Palmer & Paisley, 1991) involvement are key to successful SAP implementation. In addition, Cavendish (1991) reported that the creation of a needs database through student surveying is critical to SAP success.

In a qualitative study of SAPs implementation, Herberg, Hughes, and Bond (1990) identified seven characteristics that separated unsuccessful programs from successful ones. These characteristics were: 1. Lack of a formal identification program, 2. lack of staff involvement in identifying students, 3. lack of staff training in identification, 4. lack of referral training, 5. lack of access to formal assessments, 6. lack of established reentry programs, and 7. lack of administrative support.

There is a wide spread disagreement in the literature as to the minimum academic degree necessary for key SAP personnel. Snyder (1984), in a study of New York based SAPs, recommended a master's degree in counseling or social work as a minimum qualification. In contrast, Dykeman (1994) reported that in Washington State no degree is required. Swisher, et al (1990) reported a wide range of degrees earned by key personnel in their study of Pennsylvania SAPs. No empirical study of the impact of formal training of key personnel on SAP implementation has been conducted.

SAP Evaluation

Taylor-Mearhoff (1990) surveyed the faculty and students served by SAPs in the middle schools and high schools of Chester County, Pennsylvania. She found 92% of the students were aware of their school's SAP and between 66% and 76% of them would refer a troubled friend to the program. Furthermore, 78% of the high school teachers related that they knew a student assisted by a SAP, while 39% of the students stated that they knew of a peer helped by a SAP. In

another study of a Pennsylvania SAP, Cooley (1993) reported that 62% of the middle school and high school students he surveyed perceived the SAP as being for all students, not just those students with an addictive behavior issue. Also, Cooley recounted that 25% of the students stated that they knew of a peer that had used a SAP service. Milgram (1989) reported that in her study, the proportion of students using SAPs increased over time.

Moore and Forster (1993) outlined a descriptive study of students (n=74) served by SAPs in Washington State (Smith, 1988). The study reported that at the post-intervention assessment, 82% of the students had improved on measures of the targeted maladaptive behaviors. Emert (1988) reported on a SAP study that used the Wisconsin Standard Intervention Evaluation Plan (SIEP). The results of this study indicated that SAP interventions produced increases in grades and attendance as well as declines in disruptive behavior. SIEP procedures and instrumentation were not presented by the author.

Dykeman (1990) conducted a research project on the support group activities of a district-wide K-12 SAP program. The project utilized a non-equivalent control group design and focused on the self-esteem and emotional distress levels in students. Pre-test results indicated there was a significant difference between the experimental and control subjects in the areas of self-esteem and emotional distress. However, at the eighth week post-test point, no significant changes in either area were found in the experimental group.

Swisher, et al (1990) represents the most comprehensive and rigorous SAP study available in the professional literature. However, even this study only employed descriptive survey analysis and retrospective comparative analysis. Their findings suggested that the following aspects of SAP implementation needed improvement: 1. Awareness programs for parents, 2. aftercare

programs, 3. awareness programs for students, 4. referral monitoring, and 5. teacher inservice.

Finally, Klitzner (1987) commented on the inadequate use of theory in most substance abuse programming. Most SAP prevention and intervention efforts are loosely based on a disease model of addictive behavior (Dean, 1989; Emert, 1988). However, there are serious questions in the scientific literature concerning the efficacy of interventions grounded in this model (Miller & Rollnick, 1993; Schneider & Colan, 1990).

Suggestions to Counselors

Planning or Engaged in SAP Work

1. Construct comprehensive and unambiguous program descriptions. This construction is a critical first step toward solid outcome evaluation (Horowitz, 1992).

2. Clarify and articulate the roles of SAP personnel. Establish a SAP personnel performance evaluation process. Only one study outlined a possible evaluation framework for key SAP personnel (Snyder, 1984).

3. Conduct quality research on SAPs. Partner yourself with university professors to accomplish such research. If you cannot find a partner, call the author of this paper.

4. Make reports on your SAP work and research to school boards, parent groups, and community agencies (Horowitz, 1992).

5. Ground your interventions in theory that has empirical support in the literature (Klitzner, 1987). For instance, ground one's addictive behavior interventions on a behavioral (Miller & Rollnick, 1991) rather than disease model of addiction (Dean, 1989; Milam & Ketcham, 1983).

6. The research conducted thus far suggests that faculty and SAP staff training is critically

important. Be sure to allocate adequate time and resources for this training. Also, evaluate this training in order to identify the most effective approaches.

7. No research exists as to whether the contracted or organic SAP personnel model is superior. This author has worked with both models and his impression is that the organic model generates more support for SAP activities among faculty members. However, this impression needs to be put to empirical test.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the theory and pragmatics of SAP implementation and evaluation. While the SAP approach holds much promise, more quality research on this school based approach is needed to prove it effectiveness.

References

Cavendish, J. M. (1991). From data to program decisions: developing a student assistance program. Journal of College Student Health, 39, 191-193.

Cooley, V. E. (1993). Tips for implementing a student assistance program. NASSP Bulletin, 76, 10-20.

Dean, O. A. (1989). Facing chemical dependency in the classroom with student assistance programs. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Dykeman, C. (1990). SAP support group research project: preliminary report. Seattle, WA: Highline School District.

Dykeman, C. (1994). The privatization of school counseling. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Emert, V. (1988). The student assistance program: A way to make a difference. Adolescent Counselor, 1, 32-33.

Herberg, T., Hughes, J. & Bond, E. (1990). Components of successful intervention programs. Student Assistance Journal, 3, 40-41.

Horowitz, J. E. (1992, April). Evaluating a student assistance program as part of a larger prevention effort. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational research Association, San Francisco, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 344 135)

Klitzner, M. D. (1987). An assessment of the research on school based prevention programs. In U.S. Department of Education (Ed.), Report to congress and the white house on the nature and effectiveness of federal, state, and local drug prevention and intervention programs. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education.

Klitzner, M., Blasinsky, M., Marshall, K., & Paquet, U. (1985). Determinants of youth attitudes and skills towards drinking/driving prevention programs should be directed: Volume I. (DOT Report No. HS 806 903). Springfield, VA: National Technical Information Service.

McGovern, J. P. & DuPont, R. L. (1991). Student assistance programs: An important approach to drug abuse prevention. Journal of School Health, 61, 260-264.

Milam, J. & Ketcham, K. (1983). Under the influence. New York: Bantam Books.

Milgram, G. G. (1989). Impact of a student assistance program. Journal of Drug Education, 19, 327-335.

Miller, W. R. & Rollnick, S. (1993). Motivational interviewing. New York: Guilford.

Moore, D. D. & Forster, J. R. (1993). Student assistance programs: New approaches for reducing adolescent substance abuse. Journal of Counseling & Development, 71, 326-329.

Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP). (1988). You can start a student assistance program. Rockville, MD: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 329 883)

Palmer, J. H. & Paisley, P. O. (1991). Student assistance programs: A response to substance abuse. The School Counselor, 38, 287-293.

Schneider, R. & Colan, N. (1990). EAP referrals: From supervisor training to client assessment. Boston, MA: Boston University, Center on Work and Family.(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 328 844)

Smith, A. (1988). Final evaluation report of the student assistance program core team training project, school year 1987-1988. Technical report to the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Seattle, WA: University of Washington, Center for the Study and Teaching of At-Risk Students.

Snyder, G. (1984). Preventing alcohol and other drug problems through a student assistance program. Rockville, MD: NIAAA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 264 495)

Swisher, J. D., Baker, S. B., Barnes, J. A. Doebler, M. K., Haldeman, D. E., & Kophazi, K. M. (1990). An evaluation of student assistance programs in Pennsylvania. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 326 620)

Taylor-Mearhoff, C. (1990). Suicide prevention: The student assistance model. Pottstown, PA: Roberts School District. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 322 410)